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F R I D A Y H I G H L I G H T S

+ Security Council deplores Croatian army offensive today in "pink zones" -- areas in Croatia controlled by local Serb forces; appeals to all parties to cooperate fully with peace process in region; Secretary-General also deplores Croatian offensive calling it "setback" to efforts by United Nations Peace-keepers in Croatia.

+ Resuming in Geneva tomorrow, 23 January, peace talks on Bosnia and Herzegovina will focus on delimitation of provinces, or "map", says Spokesman for Co-Chairmen of Yugoslav Conference.

+ Secretary-General briefs Security Council on total of twenty-two issues in Africa, Asia, Central America, Europe, Haiti, Middle East and Pacific.

+ Bosnia and Herzegovina questions Security Council's preliminary conclusions that recent assassination by its Deputy Prime Minister was "act of one soldier acting alone".

+ European Community Commission launches new $10 million food aid programme for refugees in former Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro).

+ Foreign Ministers of Association of South-East Asian Nations express concern over intensified political harassment and even assassinations perpetrated against personalities and political workers of various political parties in Cambodia.

+ Palestine Rights Committee condemns Israel's deportation of over 400 Palestinians.

+ Fawzi Hamad Al-Sultan, Executive Director of World Bank representing Arab States, elected President of International Fund for Agricultural Development at its 16th session in Rome yesterday.

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For information media--not an official record

The Security Council today deplored the Croatian army offensive that took place today in the "pink zones" -- areas in Croatia controlled by local Serb forces. It also deplored the violations by all sides of the United Nations peace-keeping plan and appealed to all parties to cooperate fully with the peace process in the region .

In a statement read out on behalf of Council members by its President, Yoshio Hatano (Japan), the Council urged the Croatian authorities "to withdraw their forces to positions occupied before the offensive and thereby support the efforts of the Force Commander of the United Nations Protection Force in Croatia (UNPROFOR) to diffuse the situation.

The statement demanded that all parties adhere faithfully to all relevant Security Council resolutions and urged all parties "to undertake no action that could jeopardize the peace process" and to cooperate fully with the Co-Chairmen of the Yugoslav Conference in their current efforts.

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali this evening also deplored the "unilateral military action" by the Croatian authorities in the "pink zones". In a statement issued by his Spokesman, he said the action was "a setback" to the efforts by the United Nations Protection Forces in Croatia (UNPROFOR) to achieve a peaceful transfer or control in the "pink zones".

According to the statement, President Fanjo Tudjman of Croatia told UNPROFOR Commander, Lieutenant-General Satish Nambiar, during a meeting earlier today, that the military action had been undertaken for the limited purpose of providing security for the construction of a bridge at Maslenica. His forces would not withdraw from the site, but they had no intention of extending operations to other area, he said.

The statement went on to say that UNPROFOR was taking all steps in its power to prevent the situation from escalating. In addition to reiterating his demand that the Croatian army withdraw to positions held before the recent offensive, UNPROFOR Commander Nambiar had called upon the local Serb authorities to exercise restraint and not to embark upon a cycle of action and retaliation which could have "calamitous consequences".

The Secretary-General said the Deputy Force Commander of UNPROFOR, Major-General Gaudreau, had been sent to the area to review the situation and to issue the necessary directives to UNPROFOR personnel there.

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Resuming in Geneva tomorrow, 23 January, the peace talks aimed at ending the nine-month conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina will focus on the delimitation of provinces, or "the map", Fred Eckhard, the Spokesman for the Co-Chairmen of the Yugoslav Conference, said yesterday.

Speaking to correspondents in Geneva, he said the principal participants were expected to be the same as at the previous summit round. At the outset of Saturday's session, there would most likely be a formal approval by the three

parties of the first part of the "three-part peace package" -- the Constitutional Principles.

Mr. Eckhard went on to say that even after the plan was approved, there would probably be difficulties in its implemention and in keeping the parties true to the letter and spirit of the agreement. A Constitution would have to be drafted and arrangements made for an interim Government. Nevertheless, there was a sense of a momentum and a hope that the talks could be winding up toward a successful conclusion, he added.

Among the participants in the talks are President Izetbegovic of Bosnia and Herzegovina; the Bosnian Croat leader, Mate Boban; the Bosnian Serb leader, Radovan Karadzic; President Tudjman of Croatia; and President Cosic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro).

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali briefed the Security Council this morning on a total of twenty-two issues regarding Africa, Asia, Central America, Europe, Haiti, the Middle East and the Pacific.

Following the informal meeting, the Secretary-General was asked by correspondents whether he was satisfied with Iraq's compliance with the Council resolutions. He pointed out that there were certain resolutions with which there has not been compliance, such as Iraq's "participation in the Commission dealing with the boundaries". However, he welcomed the "new attitude of the Government of Iraq".

On the question of the United Nations taking over the operations in Somalia, the Secretary-General said the transition had been prepared for in meetings with the Unified Command. He said he could not give a date for the transition.

The Secretary-General said the Council also discussed a letter sent by the Holy See asking the mediation of the Secretary-General with the Council to promote a dialogue between Iraq and the Council.

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Bosnia and Herzegovina has expressed doubts about preliminary conclusions reached by the Security Council on the killing of the Bosnian Deputy Prime Minister, Hajika Turajlic, earlier this month by Serbian forces.

In a letter to the Secretary-General, dated 20 January, Muhamed Sacirbey, the Bosnian Permanent Representative to the United Nations, questioned the letter he had received from the Council citing the assassination as "the act of one soldier acting alone". At the very least, he wrote, "the Serbian leadership is guilty of criminal complicity in the killing".

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Mr. Sacirbey, while pointing out that the Council's excerpted conclusions on the killing were "entirely unsupported", said he hoped that the publication of the full report would shed light on the behaviour of Serbian forces.

A Special Commission of Inquiry was set up by the Secretary-General in mid-January to investigate the killing of the Bosnian Deputy Prime Minister. It is headed by Sahabzada Yaqub-Khan, former Foreign Minister of Pakistan, and Lars-Eric Wahlgren, Commander of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). A full report by the Commission is expected before the end of the month.

In related news, Croatia has submitted documents on war crimes committed on the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

In a letter to the President of the Security Council, dated 20 January, the Croatian Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Mario Nobilo, said the documentation contained eyewitness testimonies of mass killings by the Yugoslav army and Serbian paramilitaries, as well as accounts of burials in mass graves in eastern Croatia. He appealed to the Council to adopt necessary measures to secure the sites of mass graves and protect them from possible tampering in the interest of future investigation of war crimes committed in that region.

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The European Community (EC) Commission has launched a new $10 million food aid programme for refugees in the former Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), raising to $350 million the EC's total contributions to international humanitarian aid efforts since September 1991.

According to a statement issued by the EC today, the new aid programme will over the next two months deliver some 325,000 parcels of basic food and sanitary supplies to host families sheltering refugees in the former republics.

It is the first direct operation of the recently established European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) and is being carried out in close cooperation with the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Red Cross organizations of both Serbia and Montenegro.

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The Foreign Ministers of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), in a statement addressed to the President of the Security Council, have expressed concern over intensified political harassment and even assassinations perpetrated against personalities and political workers of various political parties in Cambodia.

The statement was signed by the Permanent Representative of Singapore to the United Nations, Chew Tai Soo, on behalf of the Permanent Representatives to the United Nations of the States which are members of ASEAN: Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia and Brunei.

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Expressing "grave concern" over the recent spate of killings of residents of Vietnamese origin, the statement also warned that this could "eventually lead to renewed large-scale fighting in Cambodia". It called on all Cambodian parties to cooperate with the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) and to contribute to ensure a peaceful and neutral political environment so that there can be "free and fair elections" as stipulated in the Paris Peace Agreements.

It further welcomed Prince Norodom Sihanouk's candidacy in the Presidential election slated to be held in April or May this year, and expressed its belief that he would be able to play a "pivotal" role in bringing about national reconciliation among all Cambodians. An elected President would facilitate the conduct of the general elections and would also provide an anchor of stability in the period after the elections, the statement added.

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The United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People has strongly condemned Israel's deportation of more than 400 Palestinians from the occupied territories on 17 December 1992.

At a meeting yesterday at Headquarters, the Committee condemned Israel's persistent refusal to comply with Security Council resolution 799 (1992) which demanded that it ensure the safe and immediate return of the deportees to the occupied territories. Furthermore, it called upon the Council to take all necessary measures, including the application of Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter allowing States "to take action ... as may be necessary" to bring about the implementation of its resolution. The Committee stated that such action would help ensure the continuation of the Middle East peace process and preserve the credibility of the Council.

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Fawzi Hamad Al-Sultan was elected President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) at the Agency's 16th session in Rome yesterday. Mr. Al-Sultan, the Executive Director of the World Bank representing Arab States, was elected by acclamation and succeeds Idriss Jazairy who completes his second four-term on 23 January.

In his acceptance speech, Mr. Al-Sultan stressed the growing importance of IFAD's work, citing increased global poverty which places additional pressures on the world's resources. He said IFAD needed to reach out more to the rural poor and to be more effective with its interventions.

Prior to his transfer to the World Bank in 1984, the 48-year-old Kuwaitian was the Managing Director of the Bank of Kuwait and the Middle East and the Director of Research at the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development.

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